

Pedals in Perspective: Part 1

by
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LUDWIG 201 SPEED KING

The world-famous *Speed-King* was first introduced in 1937, and has come to be the "old standard." A one-piece cast footboard with reversible heel plate and heel grip on one side allows it to also be a split footboard pedal. The pedal relies on two enclosed compression springs for its action. Spring tension is adjustable with a screwdriver fitting into slotted screws underneath the pedal, which from the playing position, is not very convenient. The pedal must be fully removed from the drum hoop to adjust spring tension. It has a 3/8" pressed metal connecting link that is easily replaceable if need be. The link is perhaps the strongest part of the pedal; so strong in fact, in a rare incident, I've seen it break its own retaining pins, or at least pull them out. The footboard connects to the frame using a stretch plate hooking into a slot at the base of the framework. The pedal clamps to the drum hoop via a wing screw and claw plate at the base. I find this a bit unnerving, as you have to get down on your knees to secure the pedal to the bass drum. The old *Speed Kings* came with a rubber skid pad adhered to the underside of the stretch plate; the new ones do not. However, the Ludwig parts catalog indicates that the skid pad is still available separately (very useful on slippery floors)!

Some drummers have asked to have the *Speed King* beefed up to 1980 proportions; wider and thicker footboard, fatter posts, spurs, etc., but if that ever came about, the *Speed King* just wouldn't be the old tried and true *Speed King*. A leather or Lexan strap could possibly solve some of the problems which may result from the strength of the metal linkage, but the link would be weaker, and the action of the pedal wouldn't be the same. Then there is the "Speed King squeak". From experience I've noticed that after a long period of time following break-in, the pedal will begin to squeak at the rocker joints. I have found no long term preventives against this.

There are no other adjustments besides spring tension and beater height, yet the pedal has one of the best feels of any drum pedal on the market. The ball bearing rocker makes for very smooth, responsive action. Discounting some of the minor mechanical problems that could possibly pop up the *Speed King* is still a highly efficient pedal. The action

always feels natural, and its 43 years of production speaks for itself. RETAIL PRICE: \$84.00.

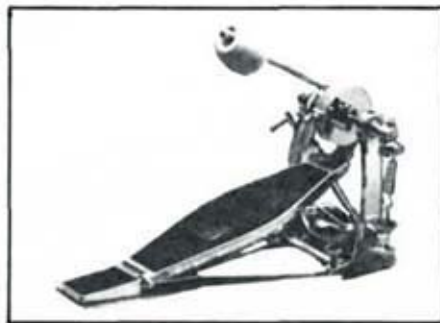


SONOR Z5317

The Z5317 is Sonor's least expensive drum pedal, manufactured in West Germany. It has a single expansion spring adjustable near the base of the frame with two threaded large washers much like the top of a hi-hat clutch. The bottom washer adjusts the spring; the top washer comes down to meet it at a protruding plate locking in the tension setting. Sonor had the foresight to include three extra springs of different strengths to satisfy different players' tastes. The Z5317 has a split footboard inset with ribbed rubber (sort of like some auto floor mats). It's very hard to slip off this pedal. Included at the top of the footboard is a fat, inverted "U" hook which serves as a toe-stop. It's not adjustable, but can be removed completely. The heel section has a skid pad underneath also set with the same ribbed rubber as the footboard. Mating of heel to frame is accomplished with two curved flexible metal rods fitting into holes at the frame base. Beater linkage is a thick strap made of industrial fiber punched with a hole surrounded by a metal eyelet. The strap wraps around a pivot pin at the footboard. It's then doubled to itself, wrapping a large disc joined to the cam axle. Vertical footboard angle can be adjusted by locating the strap's eyelet hole and slot screw into any one of six holes on the disc. And the strap is very easily replaceable. The Z5317 comes with a conical felt beater set with a slotted screw and adjustable in throw by means of a ratchet moving on one side of the cam axle disc. Pedal posts are chrome-plated with roller bearing action. At the base of each post is a sprung spur. Half-way down the left post is a large angled

T-handle' screw which serves to clamp the pedal in place by screwing down on a sprung metal bar, the most convenient clamp method of any of the pedals reviewed in this *Close-Up*.

Directly out of the box, the spring already fitted to the pedal had a somewhat alien feel. But Sonor's thoughtfulness in including other strength springs made it easy to get to my favorite tension. The overall action is very smooth. I don't really like the conical beater, but this can be changed as the accepting hole will take other beater stems. The Z5317 is a beautifully engineered pedal. Lots of chrome-plating makes this drum pedal look as good as it plays. Adjustments are so varied that the Sonor Z5317 can meet anyone's needs. The quality warrants it being near the top of the general drum pedal price line. RETAIL PRICE: \$142.50.



TAMA 6755 KING BEAT

The *King Beat* from Japan is the current top-of-the-line drum pedal for Tama. It has a split footboard which is slightly curved, and has a non-adjustable toe stop. At the base of the heel plate is a screw-adjusting hard rubber circular pad. By rotating the pad disc on its screw, the heel plate can be elevated giving a slight change to the footboard angle. The *King Beat* has a large, square, cast single post in which is enclosed a compression spring. Compression tension is adjustable at the bottom of the post by turning the large slotted cap with the screwdriver provided. The pedal must be removed from the drum to work this cap. The cap can also be adjusted by hand, but this is difficult from the playing position, and won't turn very easily. Notched into the side of the post are three "memory-marks" used as adjustment reference points if you like. The pedal can collapse on a hinge at the middle of the heel-to-frame link bar, enabling it to fit into a trap case. The felt

beater's angle is adjustable via a ratchet cam, with many positions of stroke available. Beater height is adjusted by means of a large wing screw and eye bolt. The beater linkage connecting to the footboard is 5/8" metal strap, removable at the footboard, but pinned in place around the top rocker arm. The *King Beat* clamps to the drum hoop by using a plate and cam lifter which when tightened with a drum key to fit your hoop



thickness, is activated by a lever at the bottom of the frame. The base of the pedal also has a pair of spring-adjust spurs.

I found the *King Beat's* action a bit stiff, necessitating a lot of foot effort to push the beater into the head, however this was at the factory set tension. I had to back off the spring tension quite a bit below the recommended "memory-marks" to get an adequate action. The physical appearance of the *King Beat* is

also quite exaggerated. Recommended to those heartily into heavy, monster hardware. RETAIL PRICE: \$90.00.



SLINGERLAND 944 YELLOW JACKET

The *Yellow Jacket* is a comparatively new pedal from Slingerland. It has a split footboard and at the bottom of the heel, a 3/8" thick rubber skid plate attached. The heel attaches to the frame via two metal rods curving into holes at the base. The connecting link is a permanently attached 5/8" metal strap. I find this disappointing. If by some chance, the strap wears or breaks, it would be very difficult to replace in a hurry. The *Yellow Jacket's* tension is adjusted by double external expansion springs stretched downward. One nice feature of this particular tension system is that each spring's tension knob has a notch cut into it, rather than the regular-type

knurled knob found on other expansion spring pedals. The notch provides for exact spring adjustment, and at the same time, locks the knob so it won't loosen up while playing. Stroke is adjustable in three positions by changing the radius of each cam. The clamp uses the common wing screw/plate, but also has a cam lever beneath it. When first set up, the wing is tightened as normal. The pedal is then clamped to the drum by moving the cam lever left to right. Slingerland was insightful enough to include both a felt and wooden beater. Beater height is adjusted by a screw cast to take a drum key. However, the beater is set somewhat off center from the footboard, and it seems like the balance of the pedal is upset. At the base of the frame beneath the posts are angled sprung spurs to help keep the pedal (and the drum) in stable position. But beware, like all other drum pedal spurs, they will dig up wood floors.

While playing, I noticed an extremely springy action—perhaps even *too* alive. But, after getting used to the *Yellow Jacket's* action, I found it to be responsive, even though at times, a little hard to keep under control. Double sprung pedals do have a somewhat "bouncy" feel to them, anyway. The *Yellow Jacket*, for the most part, is a well engineered pedal and is very sturdy. It does what it is supposed to do, looks sleek, and feels good under your foot. RETAIL PRICE: \$87.00.



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